

FIRST NEST RECORDS FOR THE PLAIN TITMOUSE AND BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER IN WYOMING

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ABSTRACT.— Nests of Plain Titmice and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are reported from Wyoming for the first time. Both species probably breed fairly commonly in southwestern and south central portions of the state.

In Wyoming the Plain Titmouse (*Parus inornatus*) and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) are considered uncommon, peripheral species and occur primarily in southwestern and south central portions of the state (Oakleaf et al. 1982). Nest records have not been previously reported for either species.

The first confirmed nesting record of the Plain Titmouse in Wyoming occurred on 4 June 1981 when S. D. Fitton located a nest near Powder Rim, about 113 km southwest of Rawlins, Sweetwater Co. Evidence of a nest included the presence of two adult titmice that were observed entering and leaving a nest cavity several times. The nest cavity was not examined for the presence of eggs or young.

During 1982 four nests of this species were found in Wyoming. The first nest was located by S. D. Fitton on 17 May near Little Firehole Canyon, 13 km southeast of Green River, Sweetwater Co. On 29 May a second nest was discovered by S. D. Fitton south of Powder Rim, about 22 km southeast of the 1981 nesting locale and approximately 1 km north of Colorado. Both nests contained an undetermined number of young that were audible from the nest cavities. Also, adult titmice were observed defending the nest sites. Six days later I located a Plain Titmouse nest containing two recently hatched nestlings in Firehole Canyon, 18 km southeast of Green River, Sweetwater Co. On the following day I found another nest containing an undetermined number of nestlings near Minnies Gap, approximately 55 km south of Green River,

Sweetwater Co., and less than 1 km from Utah. All nests found during 1981 and 1982 were in cavities of Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) trees.

Several family groups containing recently fledged young titmice were also located in southwestern and south central Wyoming. This indicates that Plain Titmice probably breed rather commonly throughout these portions of the state.

The first possible breeding evidence for the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in Wyoming was reported by White and Behle (1960). On 4 July 1959 a family group of gnatcatchers were observed at mile 371 on the Green River, Sweetwater Co. Also, one adult and one juvenile were collected at the same locale. Additional details of this possible breeding record are lacking.

The first nest of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in Wyoming was not located until 10 June 1982, when I observed a pair of gnatcatchers constructing a nest in Firehole Canyon, 18 km southeast of Green River, Sweetwater Co. The nest was located in a Utah juniper tree about 6 m from the ground. When the nest was rechecked 10 days later, it contained six eggs. Since the nest site was not revisited, I am uncertain how many eggs hatched or how many young fledged.

On 28 June 1982 S. D. Fitton found the second Wyoming nest near Powder Rim, about 113 km southwest of Rawlins, Sweetwater Co. Three nestlings were present in the nest and about ready to fledge. This nest was also in a Utah juniper tree. Although additional nests or family groups containing

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recently fledged young were not found, several pairs of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were observed in southwestern and south central Wyoming and suspected of breeding. This suggests that the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher may also breed fairly commonly in these portions of the state.

The breeding habitat of the Plain Titmouse and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher consists mainly of Utah juniper woodlands interspersed with open areas containing big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), other shrubs, and grasses.

Both the Plain Titmouse and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher also breed in adjacent areas of northeastern Utah (Behle 1981), northwestern Colorado (Kingery and Graul 1978), and southeastern Idaho (Burleigh 1972). The lack of observers in southwestern and south central Wyoming has probably accounted for the paucity of nesting records of both species.

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